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ABSTRACT

Sex bias in performance evaluations has been found in laboratory research as well as in a variety of organizational settings. To explore the effects of hiring practices on performance evaluations and other personnel decisions in an experimental analog of affirmative action, 154 female undergraduates rated a fictitious male or female college professor hired under one of three conditions, i.e., with academic credentials and competence, through affirmative action pressures, or randomly. The performance profile of the professor was varied, i.e., half the descriptions tended to be more favorable in the course of the semester, and the other half tended to be less favorable. Results supported the hypothesis that the more equitable the selection method, the more favorable the performance appraisal. In addition, the male professor was evaluated more favorably than the female professor, a result consistent with previous research. The findings suggest that employees hired under affirmative action may be perceived as having been selected unfairly and inequitably. (Author/JAC)

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Effects of Hiring Practices and Performance Profiles on Personnel Functions: An Experimental Analog of Affirmative Action*

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Effects of Hiring Practices and Performance Profiles on Personnel Functions: An Experimental Analog of Affirmative Action

There is a growing body of literature suggesting that women are evaluated differently, and often more negatively, than men. In Goldberg's (1968) landmark study college women were asked to evaluate professional articles in terms of writing style, professional competence and professional status written by a male or female author. The results revealed that the male authors' articles were evaluated more favorably indicating a downgrading of female performance on the basis of sex. The results were particularly striking because the male author was evaluated more favorably than the female writer in all fields including those stereotyped as masculine such as law and city planning as well as those stereotyped as feminine such as dietetics and elementary school teaching.

Sex bias in performance evaluations has been found in laboratory research as well as in variety of real-world organizational settings. Rosen, Jerdee, and Prestwich (1975), for instance, reported that male managers rated male candidates as more acceptable and having greater potential for long service to the organization than identical female candidates, a finding which has been replicated by numerous studies (e.g., Dipboye, Fromkin, & Wiback, 1975; Dipboye, Arvey, & Terpstra, 1977).

A variety of interpretations have been advanced to account for the differential performance evaluations of men and women. Bias in evaluation has been suggested to be a function of the type of work involved (Cline, Holmes, & Werner, 1977), the demands of the job (Rosen & Jerdee, 1974a), whether the job is seen as gender appropriate and whether the outcome of the work effort is clear or ambiguous. The effects of sex congruent jobs (i.e., elementary

school teaching for women) and sex-incongruent jobs (i.e., nursing for men), on various types of evaluations, for instance, have been noted repeatedly (e.g., Cohen & Bunker, 1975). These authors provided evidence that both male and female applicants for sex-incongruent positions are viewed less favorably than applicants for sex-congruent jobs. Cohen and Bunker suggested that the attitudes of personnel managers and supervisors towards sex-role incongruency may be a crucial mediating variable in his/her hiring decisions and performance evaluations. Similarly, Levinson (1975) also reported the negative effects of sex-role incongruence. In this study students responded to sex-typed jobs (delivery boys, salesman, office clerk, telephone operators) with low skills and low educational requirements. Employers were much more likely to turn away applicants who applied for sex-incongruent jobs than applicants applying for sex-congruent jobs.

Theoretical interpretations of the more negative evaluations of female performance have relied primarily on attribution or equity theory. Research on sex differences in causal attributions (e.g., Deaux & Emswiller, 1974; Deaux & Taynor, 1973; Cash, Gillen, & Burns, 1977) indicates that women, compared to men, are more likely to attribute their performance to external factors such as luck or the difficulty of the task. Moreover, when women do attribute successful performance to an internal cause, they are likely to use the unstable factor of effort rather than the stable factor of ability.

Equity theory (Adams, 1965; Walster, Walster, & Berscheid, 1978), on the other hand, suggests that individuals try to maximize their total outcomes by devising an equitable system for sharing resources. According to the theory, the more equitable the method of selecting applicants, the more favorable the employee's evaluation. This prediction was supported in one laboratory study

(Jacobson & Koch, 1977) which explored the relationship between equity of leader selection and subsequent performance evaluations of female leaders. The result supported the experimental hypothesis, i.e., when a woman was perceived to have obtained a desirable position of leadership over a man on the basis of an unfair selection process, evaluation of her leadership performance by that man suffered (p. 155).

With the passage of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act, a new variable entered into the appraisal process, a variable which has received almost no attention--namely the way in which an employee is selected for a job. The passage of the Act resulted in a national effort to make operational the concept of equal opportunity in employment. This means that organizations must now go beyond merely not discriminating against women and other minority groups; instead they must actively seek women and minority applicants. Through affirmative action programs companies are required to make an attempt to achieve fair representation of women and ethnic minorities at all levels within the organization, since they must perform analyses to identify areas of their workforce in which women and minorities are underutilized and then set numerical goals for rectifying the situation.

Because present legal guidelines are designed to reduce discrimination in selection, evaluation, and promotion decisions, most organizations are aware that they can be subject to surveillance by the EEOC, the Office of Federal Contract Compliance or some state agency within the Department of Labor (Gordon & Strober, 1975). As a result, it appears that corporations sometimes bring in women to prevent costly lawsuits, loss of government contracts and avoid unfavorable publicity.

The legal requirements embodied in the Civil Rights Act and EEOC Guidelines have not only created a variety of affirmative action programs but also

a backlash, on part of the female employee, to the preferential treatment of women by organizations. As Chacko (1982) noted, this could be especially critical if women see their increased opportunity for participation in the labor force, particularly in higher level positions, as a means to pacify the demands of equal employment. Chacko's results revealed that female managers who perceived that they were selected because of their sex reported less organizational commitment, less satisfaction with their work, with supervision, and with their co-workers, and more role conflict and role ambiguity than women who believed they were hired because of their ability or experience.

The major purpose of this research is to examine the relationship between fairness of selection and performance evaluations of a fictitious male or female college professor by creating a conceptual analog of an affirmative action program. A second purpose is an attempt to reconcile earlier conflicting findings concerning the effect of performance patterns on performance evaluations. There have been three previous studies which examined the impact of patterns of performance, i.e., two employees have the same overall level of performance, but one has been steadily improving whereas the other's performance declined over the same period. As a result of the differential performance patterns, the two employees are rated differently. Jones, Rock, Shaver, Goethals, and Ward (1968), for example, found that an employee whose performance improved over time was rated as less able and less likely to do well in the future than an employee whose performance declined over time despite the fact that the overall performance was the same in both cases. DeNisi and Stevens (1981), on the other hand, found that ascending performance was viewed as more favorable than descending performance whereas Scott and Hammer (1975) reported no effects of the influence of variations in performance patterns on ratings of overall performance.

The focus of this research, then, is on the impact of perceived fairness of selection and variations in performance pattern on ratings of overall performance and other personnel decisions, namely allocations of salary increases. More specifically, the following hypotheses were tested in the present study:

1. The male professor will receive a more favorable rating of his overall teaching performance and consequently be recommended for a higher salary increase than his female counterpart.
2. The professor, regardless of sex, hired under affirmative action, will be evaluated less favorably and receive a lower pay raise than the professor hired because of academic excellence or who was randomly chosen.
3. The professor with the ascending performance pattern, regardless of sex, will receive more positive performance evaluations and a greater pay increase compared to the professor with the descending performance profile.
4. Hiring procedures will interact with performance patterns so that the professor with the ascending performance pattern is evaluated less favorably than the professor with the descending performance pattern who was selected based on qualifications.

Method

Subjects

The subjects for this study were 144 female undergraduate students enrolled in introductory psychology courses at an urban, southeastern university who participated voluntarily and anonymously in this research.

Procedure

Participants were asked to read the descriptions of a fictious male or female professor, Dr. John or Jane Miller, who was described along the follow-

ing five categories of teaching performance used previously by Kearny and McGann (1975)): (1) organization of course (i.e., the extent to which the professor leads the class through a logical and orderly sequence of material), (2) interesting classes (i.e., the extent to which lectures stimulate classroom discussion and arouse student interest), (3) competence of the professor (i.e., the extent to which the professor displays up-to-date knowledge and communicates in a manner understandable to students), (4) attitude toward students (i.e., the extent to which the professor values and considers the opinions of students), (5) fairness of tests, and (6) interaction with students (i.e., the extent to which the professor is accessible for extra help and provides feedback on tests and homework assignments). Both John and Jane Miller were portrayed with identical background characteristics (age, marital status) and qualifications (teaching experience, number of publications).

In half of the vignettes, the professor's performance improved in the course of the semester whereas in the other half, John or Jane's performance declined. The fictitious professor, male or female, with the ascending or descending performance profile was presented as having attained his or her position in one of three ways: (1) the professor earned the position because of professional qualifications and academic competence; (2) the professor was selected because the university had implemented an affirmative action program, and (c) the professor was randomly selected because of an unexpected vacancy in the department which needed to be filled as rapidly as possible.

Experimental Design

A 2 x 2 x 3 between subjects design was employed: sex of the professor (male vs. female), performance pattern (ascending vs. descending), and method of selection (academic competence vs. affirmative action vs. random). Participants were randomly assigned to experimental conditions and asked to make two

personnel decisions which represented the dependent measures. First, they were requested to make an overall rating of John or Jane Miller's overall teaching performance on a 9-point scale. In addition, they were asked to make a pay raise decision; the percentage of salary increase for the following academic year was an open-ended item presented with the constraint that all raises must be at least seven percent to cover cost of living but could not exceed 14 percent.

Results

Manipulation Check. The maipulation check involved subjects' perceptions of selecting the professor for the position. Participants were asked to indicate on a 9-point scale how fair they thought the selection process was. Table 1 presents the mean fairness of the selection procedure for the male and female professor. Analysis of variance showed a significant main effect for

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Insert Table 1 about here

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the selection method [$F(2, 132) = 78.23$, $p = < .01$] indicating that subjects perceived selection based upon qualifications and competence as a fairer or more equitable hiring practice than the other two selections procedures. The manipulation was, therefore, judged to have been successful.

Dependent Measures. A multivariate analysis of variance considering both dependent variables was performed. The results of this analysis, shown in Table 2 indicated significant main effects for sex [$F(1, 132) = 10.95$, $p < .01$], performance profile [$F(1, 132) = 54.38$, $p < .01$], and hiring method [$F(1, 132) = 23.80$, $p < .01$] and a significant sex x performance profile interaction [$F(1, 132) = 4.22$, $p < .05$]. Subsequently, a series of one-way

Table 1

Mean Fairness Rating of the Selection Method

for the Male and Female Professor

CONDITION									
Academic Competence			Affirmative Action			Random			
M		F	M		F	M		F
7.4		7.2	3.4		3.4	6.6		6.4

analyses was performed to determine which specific variables contributed to the overall significant MANOVA.

Insert Table 2 about here

The first dependent variable concerned the overall performance evaluations of John and Jane Miller with the ascending or descending performance pattern hired under one of the three selection procedures. Table 3 presents the means and standard deviations of the performance ratings.

As predicted, the professor who was hired because of his or her academic competence was evaluated significantly more favorably than Jane or John Miller selected at random or because of affirmative action pressures [$F(2, 132) = 26.14$, $p < .01$]. Also, as hypothesized, the professor whose performance improved in the course of the semester received a significantly more favorable overall evaluation than the professor whose performance declined [$F(1, 132) = 48.38$, $p < .01$]. Finally, a main effect for sex was obtained with John Miller being evaluated more favorably than Jane Miller [$F(1, 132) = 25.19$, $p < .01$]. The results with respect to the first dependent measure are depicted in Figure 1.

Insert Figure 1 about here

The second dependent variable concerned recommendations for salary raises, the means and standard deviations of which are depicted in Table 4.

Insert Tables 3 and 4 about here

Figure 1

Effects of Selection Methods on Performance Evaluations of a Fictitious Male and Female College Professor

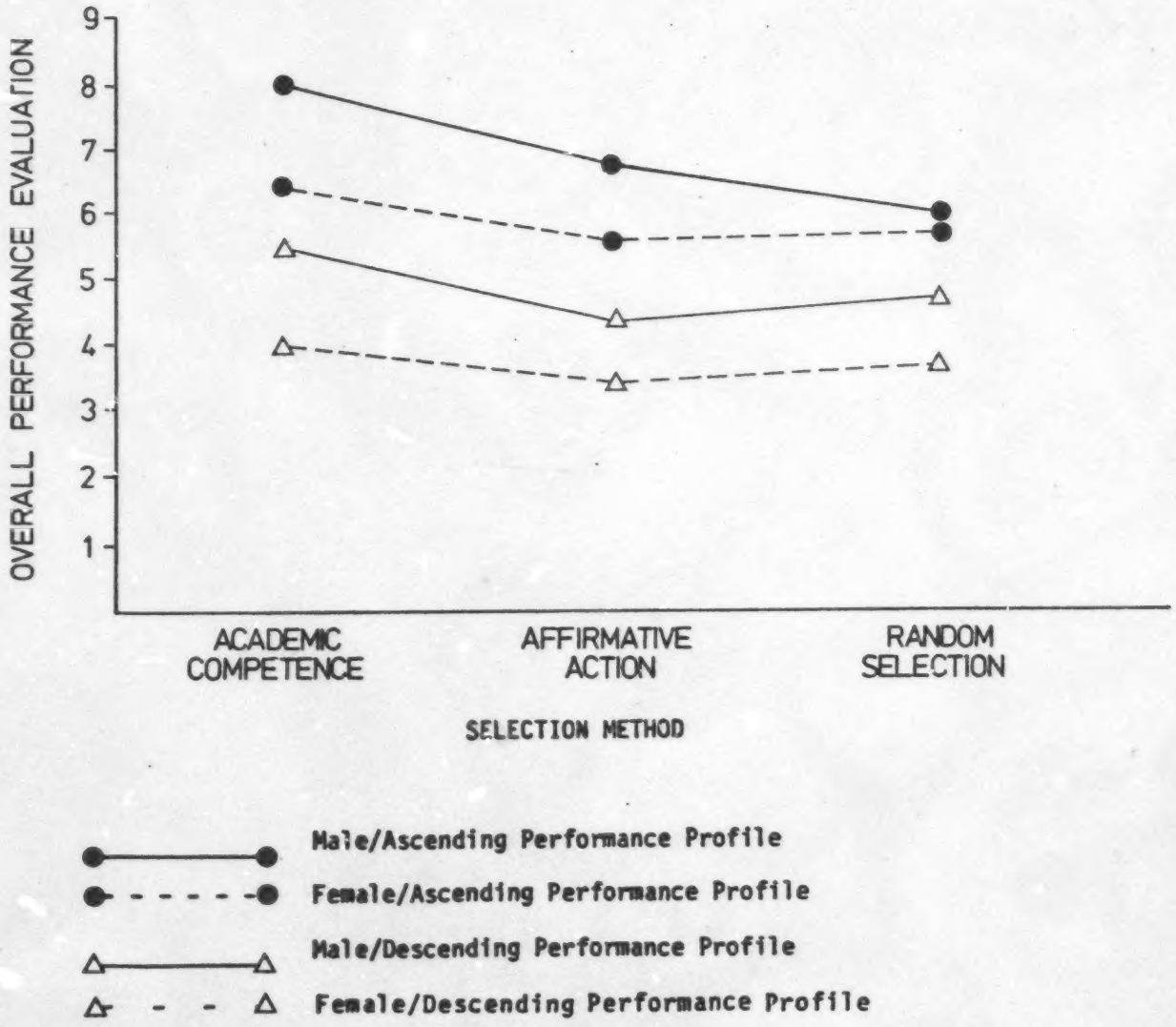


Table 2

MANOVA Summary of the Effects of Hiring Practices, Performance Profiles and Sex on Performance Evaluations and Salary Increase

Source	DF	F
Sex (S)	1	10.9476*
Performance Pattern (P)	1	54.3786*
Hiring Practice (H)	2	23.8040*
SP	1	4.2176**
SH	2	1.3983
PH	2	1.5493
SPH	2	1.4816
Error	132	

* $p < .01$

** $p < .05$

Table 3

Means and Standard Deviations of Preformance Ratings of John (M) and Jane (F) Miller

Performance Profile	Condition					
	Academic Competence		Affirmative Action		Random Selection	
	M	F	M	F	M	F
Ascending						
M	7.92	6.33	6.67	5.25	6.33	5.83
SD	0.91	1.75	1.23	0.96	1.07	1.34
Descending						
M	5.67	4.08	4.41	3.75	4.66	3.83
SD	1.23	1.38	1.31	1.22	1.23	1.11

Table 4

Means and Standard Deviations of Percentage of Salary Increase of John (M) and Jane (F) Miller

PERFORMANCE PROFILE	CONDITION					
	Academic Competence		Affirmative Action		Random Selection	
	M	F	M	F	M	F
Ascending						
M	10.87	10.58	9.25	11.24	9.00	10.50
SD	1.53	1.56	1.06	1.80	0.95	1.73
Descending						
M	9.16	8.87	8.86	8.41	8.41	8.91
SD	1.11	1.05	0.86	0.67	1.31	0.90

Again, main effects were found for sex [$F(1, 132) = 16.58$, $p < .01$] with the male professor receiving a higher salary increase than the female professor, performance pattern [$F(1, 132) = 17.17$, $p < .01$] favoring the professor with the ascending performance profile and selection method [$F(2, 132) = 17.23$, $p < .01$]. Finally, as seen in Figure 2 a significant sex x performance pattern interaction [$F(1, 132) = 7.46$, $p < .01$] was obtained.

Insert Figure 2 about here

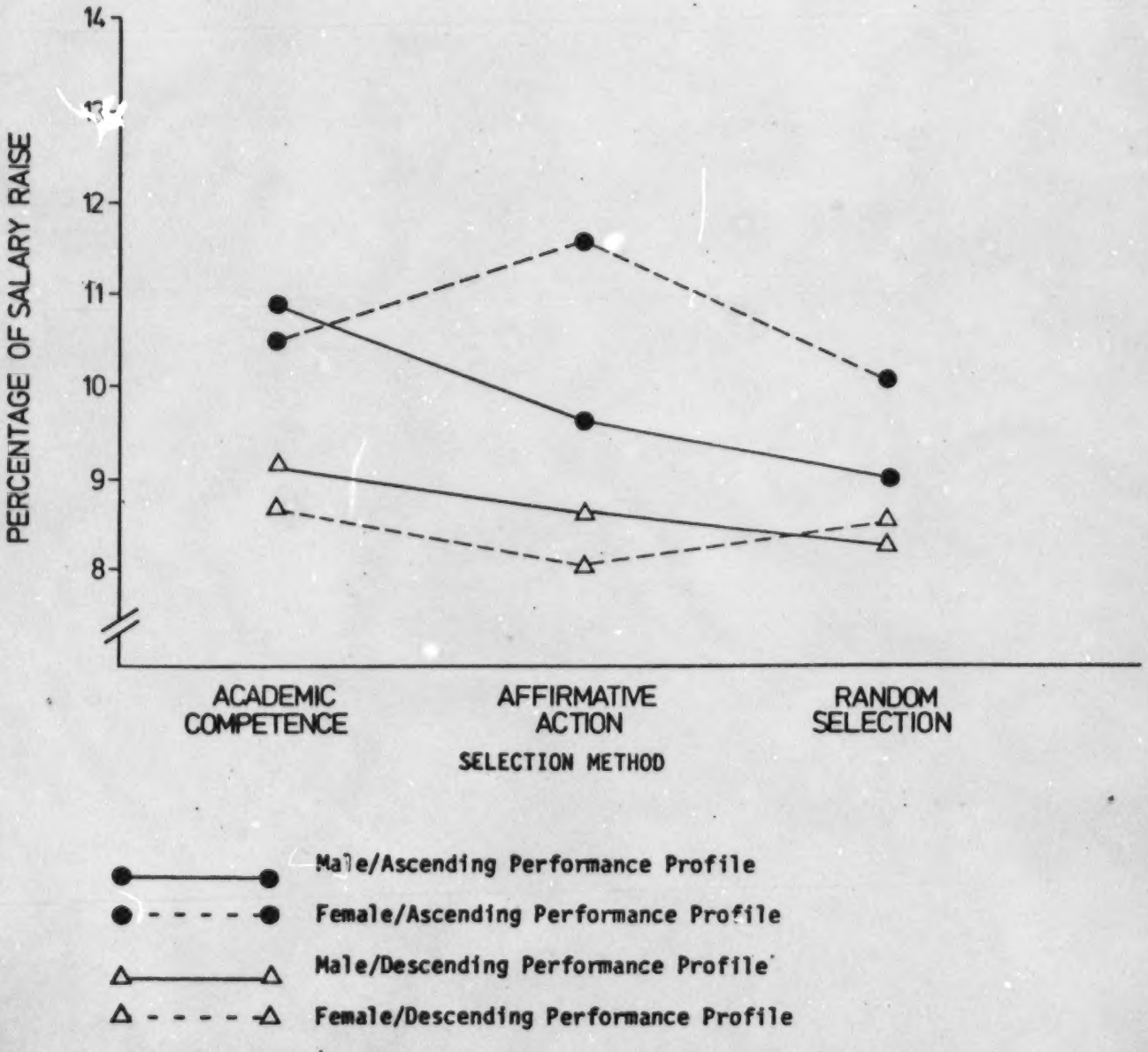
However, the interaction was in the opposite direction. The female professor in the ascending condition hired under the affirmative action program was allocated a higher pay raise than the male professor hired because of academic competence. In the descending performance pattern, the interaction effect was produced by the female professor selected at random receiving a greater pay raise than her male counterpart hired under the same condition.

Discussion

In an attempt to create an experimental analog of an affirmative action program, this study examined the relationship between fairness of selection and subsequent personnel functions such as performance evaluations and recommendations for salary increases of a fictitious male and female college professor. The predicted central hypothesis that the more equitable the method of selection, the more favorable the performance appraisal, was supported. Also, the more favorable evaluation of the male professor is consistent with previous research (e.g., Deaux & Taynor, 1973; Rosen & Jerdee, 1974b; Nieva & Gutek, 1980) which found that males received more favorable overall performance ratings than women. Other research (e.g., Rose & Andiappan, 1978) demonstrated that women are discriminated against in personnel decisions. In

Figure 2

Effects of Selection Methods on Pay Increases
Allocated to a Fictitious Male and Female Professor



a simulated business situation female applicants were expected by undergraduate evaluators to be more successful, have longer careers with the employer, better satisfied customers and provide more satisfaction for subordinates when the employees they were to manage were predominantly female.

The results of this study imply a certain irony with respecct to affirmative action programs. Although sex bias in selection and promotion has been brought to the attention of employers under the pressure of affirmative action programs, employees hired under affirmative action are perceived as having been selected unfairly and inequitably even though the ultimate goal of affirmative action is the restoration of equity (Chacko, 1982). As White, Crino, and deSanctis (1981) suggested, affirmative action may prove to be a two-edged sword which makes it easier for women to overcome the initial entry barrier but may hamper their future advancement if being hired under affirmative leads to less favorable performance evaluations. It may be necessary for personnel management to make this point clearer and more salient to employees, so that hiring women would not be perceived as an unfair selection procedure, especially if women are underutilized in the organization.

The results with respect to the second dependent variable, the percentage of salary increase allocated to the male or female professor with the ascending or descending performance pattern hired under the three experimental conditions were surprising; hence interpretations must be considered as purely speculative. It may be that although being hired as a woman under affirmative action is viewed as an unfair selection process but once selected for the position, the female professor was given a greater percentage of pay increase based on the general knowledge of unequal pay for work requiring similar skills and abilities in many jobs. Although no measure assessing subjects'

awareness of the lack of equality of pay was included, this hypothesis warrants empirical investigation, especially in view of the fact that differential allocations of organizational rewards on the basis of gender lie at the heart of discriminatory employment practices. Or it may be, as Hagen and Kahn (1975) pointed out that in hypothetical situations, i.e., those not involving real consequences for the individual, people are more likely to make decisions in keeping with the atmosphere of the day. Participants in the present study may have responded to the hypothetical professor with attitudes more biased than those that would be elicited in real organizational settings.

Obviously, it would be premature to discuss broad implications of the study without further replication and generalizations to real-world situations must be tempered with extreme caution. In addition, the cross-sectional nature of this data imposes further limitations. For example, it may be the case that initial performance evaluations of women hired because of affirmative action may suffer but over time become more favorable as the female employee demonstrates competence on the job she was hired for. While this experiment might lack mundane realism and the results must be considered exploratory in nature, they certainly imply potential difficulties with affirmative action programs which deserve investigation in field settings.

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